

Fort Chipeewyan!

Skyword, April 1982

FORT CHIPEWYAN!

by Peggy Hodgins

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THESE SPECIALS EXPIRE APRIL 30, 1982

Untouched recreational paradise for those who want to get away from it all

by Peggy Hodgins

Even "Hot Lips" Houllighan of television's *M*A*S*H* fame wouldn't find fault with the efficiently operated Nursing Station at Fort Chipewyan.

Of course, they don't have a war going on (except against flu, chronic ailments and accidents), so the pace isn't quite

as hectic. But don't be fooled by the quiet appearance of this newly-opened building, the pleasant attitude of receptionist Bernadette Mercredi, the smiling welcome of acting head nurse Tanine Jennings, and the rest of the staff.

They're on 24-hour call and rarely make it through the night without being



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Photography by Gary Lachance

called for some emergency. And while the \$1.4 million complex is under the dual operation of the Department of Health and Welfare Canada and the local Indian Band, it is also open for everyone who lives, works or visits this tiny community.

What attracts outsiders to Fort Chip? Nurse Tanine Jennings loves this post. Friendly, attractive, outgoing and efficient, she's just the kind of person you'd most like around if you were sick and wanted to be reassured that everything will be alright.

After graduating from Vancouver, Washington with her nursing degree, Tanine worked in the States, and then headed for Burns Lake with her family. She's also worked at Fort St. John and St. Paul, Alberta.

She heard about this job, applied and has been up here since September 1981. In her capacity as acting head nurse she treats everything from colds and fractures to more serious chronic illnesses and accident victims. She and fellow nurses Kerry Chapnick and Julie Prince all work in the baby clinic spending hours immunizing youngsters and teaching young mothers on nutrition and health.

Evelyn Voyageur is the head nurse, but spends a fair amount of time away from Fort Chip leaving her staff res-

ponsible for the daily operation of the station, a responsibility that they appreciate and respond to with enthusiasm.

Chief Lawrence Courtorielle of the Cree Indian Band works closely with the station personnel and Leo Sasakamoose, nor-

thern zone director for the federal department of health and welfare.

It's a good life, according to Tanine, Julie and Kerry. They all live in an apartment building that just opened this winter, a short sprint from the station.



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Additionally, staff in this neck of the woods receive a Northern Allowance, get a good holiday, work enough overtime to afford the odd trip "outside" and are given two trips out via Pacific Western as part of their working agreement.

You'll hear the term "Medi-Vac" quite frequently up here. Because when a serious accident occurs, or a woman is about to go into labour, or anyone has a problem that can't be treated by visiting the Uranium City doctor on his weekly trip, they are sent out on an emergency flight to hospital facilities in Fort McMurray or Edmonton.

"The fact that someone comes here is serious enough," says Tanine Jennings. "What may seem trivial to one person may be an earth-shattering problem to another. So if I have any doubts at all, I Medi-Vac that person out as quickly as possible."

The Nursing Station does take on all the aspects of a harrassed MASH unit at times. There have been many occasions when no doctor was available and when the nurses have had to treat patients by long distance telephone with a doctor issuing instructions for a heart patient or accident victim.

"You need a good background,"

agrees Julie Prince who has worked throughout the prairies, and also has operating room experience she gained in Florida for six months.

"It's peaceful," says Kerry Chapnick, the lone male nurse at Fort Chip. "You have to be resourceful, and be able to enjoy a simple life up here. I go cross-country skiing, camping, hiking, and I enjoy the outdoor life."

And it's the great outdoors that makes Fort Chipewyan worth the stopover.

And if you wonder why you have a reason for recalling Fort Chipewyan, it's probably because the approximately 1500 people who live here do so in Alberta's longest established community — a fact readily available in anyone's history book.

Cree, Chipewyan, Metis and non-native people make up the population in this picturesque location on the southeastern shore of Lake Athabasca.

Fort Chipewyan is a curious and fascinating mix of tradition, history and space-age technology. There's a new R.C.M.P. post, a Parks Board office, the Keewatin College where students of all ages are educated, a high school, grade school and a kindergarten-day-school complex that rivals anything you'd find in the South.

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Video tapes and television sets share the same floor as smart spring fashions and seasonable fruits and veggies at the Hudson's Bay store here that keeps its prices competitive with the Co-op down the street.

At the Caribou Lodge, the only "hotel" in town, waitresses serve coffee while the manager of the hotel and restaurant does double duty as manager of the Treasury Branch, the town's only bank. And yes, it's located in a cubby hole to the right of the lunch bar.

Bar is a word you won't find here. Fort Chip is a "dry" town, having once again voted to remain that way for another four or five years. That line-up at the Post Office, however, includes all the people in town buying money orders to mail to Fort McMurray to the Alberta Liquor Control Board for their alcoholic refreshments. The A.L.C.B. then processes the order and sends it to Fort Chip as cargo on the airlines. So, yes, you could have an *Inglénook Chenin Blanc* with your meal — at home.

There appear to be three types of people who settle in Fort Chip: those who were born here and love it and don't particularly want it to change too much, those who moved up here as a challenge and now want to stay, and

those who saw an opportunity and are here for a definite or indefinite length of time.

The manager at The Bay will probably be transferred, the R.C.M.P. will move along, and there is a constant flow of nurses coming and going at the nursing station.

Among those who wish to stay and settle is a former Edmonton school teacher who sees the education of the Native children as a challenge. Reading and gardening are just two of the hobbies that appeal to her and others in her profession.

As for reading, there is no library, but you can order books in from Edmonton. Gardening may seem out of the question for those unfamiliar with the weather, geography and terrain of this area on the edge of the Canadian Shield. However, everything from tomatoes to cantaloupe seem to thrive in the short warm summer season.

Canadians seeking new challenge and alternative to out-of-country vacations, may well join the continuing force of enthusiastic tourists who come up to Fort Chip and head off to the wilderness.

In the winter, moose and buffalo are hunted and shared by the hunters with

others in the community. Trapping is a major source of income for many of the residents who maintain their ties with tradition by observing a nomadic form of existence and moving along wherever they find their quarry which includes the lucrative muskrat market.

For spring and summer visitors, however, Lake Athabasca beckons with fresh water fish — and lots of them — beautiful boating opportunities, and almost Caribbean-like sand dunes on some of the shores.

On a hot summer day, what better way to cool off than with a dip in the lake. Additionally, the north is peppered with small lakes and streams in the delta region and fisher-people will catch their limit if they try.

What to bring? The usual including tents, sleeping bags, and minimal cooking equipment. (If you're lucky, someone in this area will show you how to cook fish in mud — a tasty treat that has long been a Native tradition.)

There are some luxury tourist camps up here — check with a travel agent knowledgeable about the beautifully unpolluted north country.

And for those who enjoy companionship, one of the most popular people in town is Sonny Flett, who with his sister Lila Ward operates the Wood Buffalo



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Travel north of the 59th parallel presents its own rewards and demands. Sonny reminds you to bring your own personal items (unless you want to purchase them at Fort Chip), two changes of clothing (jeans, wool sweaters, down-filled jacket, rain-wear, wet-weather footwear, gloves and hat) plus flashlight, matches, insect repellent (Trust me! Don't forget that insect repellent!), suntan lotion, sun glasses, camera and film and fishing gear. Because of the tight space, it should all be packed in a heavy weather proof duffel bag and not exceed 13.5 kg. (30 pounds for your home set of scales).

There is another way to come to Fort Chip in the sunny season; via private boat (which you can rent at Fort McMurray — or drive up with your car, leaving your car at McMurray).

This has all the historical elements of the trip made in the late 1800's by Roderick MacKenzie. You needn't be too concerned that you'll be lost altogether — the Northern Transportation Company operates a fleet of barges carrying freight from the railhead at McMurray to northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories. They also stop at Uranium City, Saskatchewan.

Souvenir collectors will find beautiful driftwood on the beaches in this area, and all kinds of natural wonders. The native handicrafts are available at the local Co-op and the Bay and are beautiful. Beadwork, moccasins, and other original work is truly unique and not at all expensive.

Some local sites you won't want to miss include a stop at Dore Lake a few kilometres north of Fort Chip, the old sundial which hasn't lost a minute in years; Memorial Hill which offers a superlative view of the town and the lake; and the Church which is surrounded by beautiful plants and shrubs.

You're guaranteed of one thing in Fort Chipewyan — some of the friendliest, most helpful people you'll ever meet anywhere. There are no barriers here between the Cree, Chipewyan, Metis and non-native population. Consider yourself lucky that you had an opportunity to visit such a marvellously homogenous mixture of people.

And don't forget that camera! ☐



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PANTAGES

Dining at *Pantages* is a trip back in time to the comfortable art deco elegance of the 1920's. The richness of mahogany creates a warm and authentic atmosphere. Art deco patterns and motifs in blue and brown are enhanced with a classic blend of oak and velvet. A beautiful fireplace lounge provides an intimate setting for relaxed after-dinner conversation.

The dazzle and drama of *Pantages* provide a tribute to Winnipeg's early *Pantages* Theatre built in 1913 for Alexander *Pantages*, founder of the vaudeville theatre chain which bore his name.

Well-known in the food business for almost 30 years, restaurateur Victor Gouriluk opened *Pantages* to considerable acclaim in October 1979. It was built on the sound principles of excellent food and remarkable design. Sons Gary and Robert (not pictured) are responsible for the management of the restaurant. Vince Doyle is the chef.

The ambitious menu of Continental cuisine offers a wide range of succulent fowl, seafood, veal, lamb and beef delicacies. Specialties on the menu include Lamb Wellington, Bouillabaise, Veal Schnitzel, Pheasant Under Glass and Beef Oscar.

Over the years, the name *Pantages* became synonymous with "good show" now it has become synonymous with "good food". *Pantages* has become a favourite among Winnipeg businessmen and is fast gaining an excellent reputation across the country as one of the best places to eat in the West.

MENU

Appetizers

Coquilles St. Jacques
Shrimps Bourguignon

Soup/Salad

Swiss Onion Soup
Pantages Leaf Lettuce Salad

Entrees

Lamb Wellington
Chicken Breast Surat

Desserts

Joanna's Poppyseed Cake
Creme de Menthe Chiffon



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